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The C. I. A. Needs To Be Told

On the abundant evidence thus far of record, nobody in the Government was entirely sure what job Allen W. Dulles was hired to do, and that includes Allen W. Dulles. When he was appointed Director of the Central Intelligence Agency in 1953 his brother John Foster Dulles was Secretary of State, and they seem to have had a close and cordial understanding about C. I. A. operations in support of the elder man's foreign policy. But at no time were C. I. A. and its statutory grant of something called "other functions and duties" clearly defined or subjected to scrutiny. One heard that it employed some 15,000 or so staff personnel and that its budget might total \$1 billion a year. In the revolutions in Egypt and Iran and Guatemala were discerned, sometimes by highly sophisticated leak, the subtleties of Mr. Dulles's cloak-and-dagger boys. It seemed to stubborn constitutionalists from time to time that the C. I. A. was doing work which belonged to the Presidency, the Congress, or the Capitol, but there was no way to prove it — national security, you know; don't ask.

Mr. Dulles's luck began to run out when the U-2 adventure afforded Mr. Khrushchev his chance to humiliate President Eisenhower at Paris. And when the Cuban-invasion travesty developed, Mr. Kennedy had had enough. Time enough has elapsed now to enable getting rid of Mr. Dulles without incurring the political risk of seeming to fire a man who patriotically bungled his job. Mr. Dulles's successor is John McCone, a Republican; C. I. A. is still nonpartisan.

But the succession in which we should be chiefly interested has nothing to do with the persons. Needed is a job description. What does the C. I. A. do? What doesn't it do? Where does it get its orders? To whom does it report? For almost a decade now we've been running a sort of government within the Government. It's time we put military and diplomatic responsibility back where they belong and devise ways of seeing that the parking-lot cop doesn't mistake himself for the management of the firm. Mr. Dulles was a devoted admirer of secrecy. How well that works he now knows.